

The Hero's Journey

Joseph Campbell

English 4 CP

Joseph Campbell

- ▶ 1904-1987
- ▶ An American psychologist and mythological researcher
- ▶ Wrote the famous book entitled *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949)



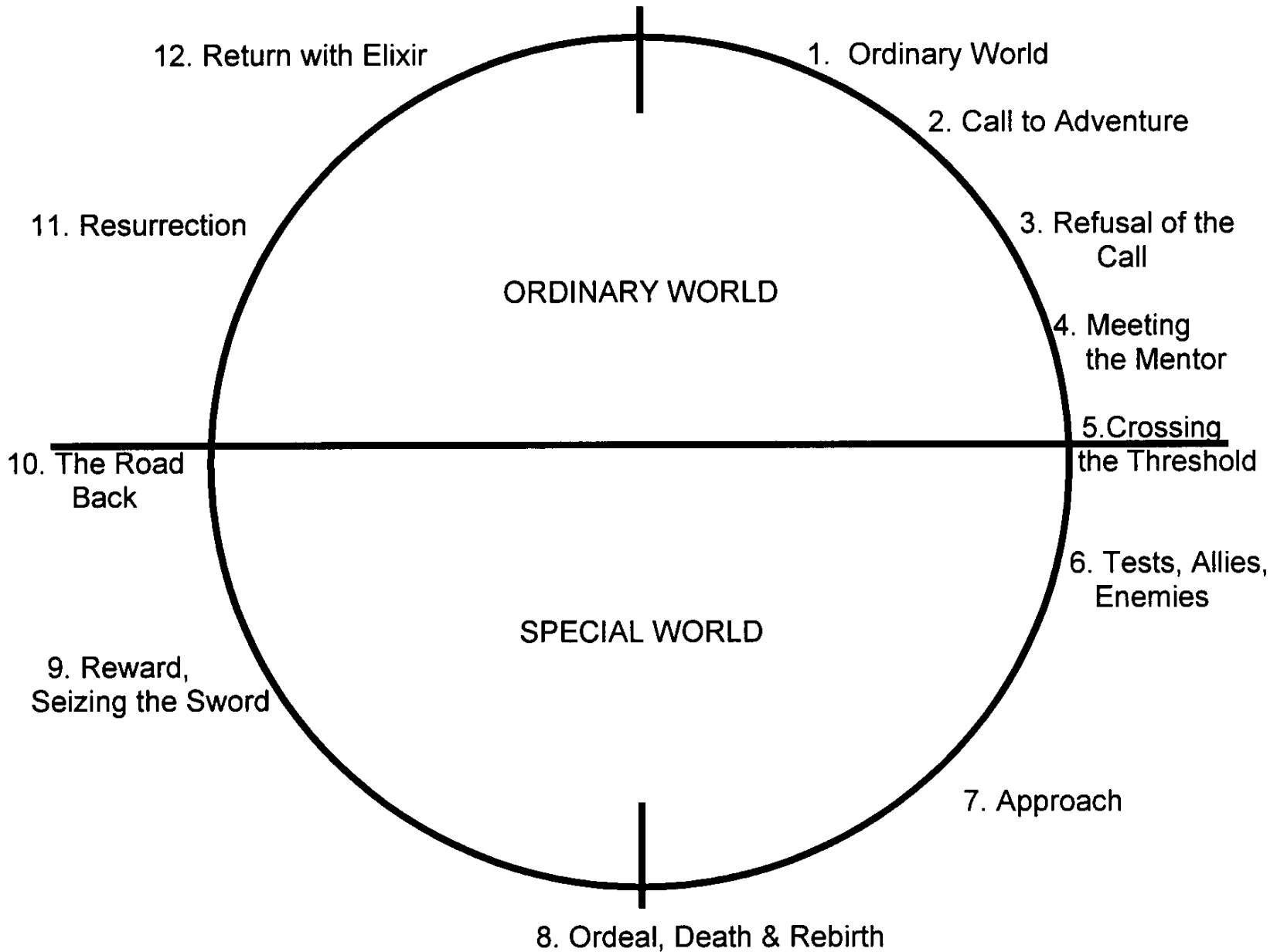
The Hero's Journey or "Monomyth"

- ▶ Campbell discovered several basic stages that almost every hero-quest goes through (no matter the culture).
- ▶ He calls this common structure the "monomyth" or the Hero's Journey
- ▶ Campbell argues that classic myths from many cultures follow this basic pattern

The Hero's Journey or "Monomyth"

- ▶ Not all myths contain all stages—some myths contain many of the stages, while others contain only a few; some myths may focus on only one of the stages, while other myths may deal with the stages in a somewhat different order.
- ▶ The pattern goes back thousands of years. It has also influenced modern writers and filmmakers. He didn't invent the pattern, he just identified it.

THE HERO'S JOURNEY



The Ordinary World

- ▶ 1.) The hero is introduced in his/her ordinary world.
- ▶ Most stories ultimately take us to a special world, a world that is new and alien to its hero. If you're going to tell a story about a fish out of his customary element, you first have to create a contrast by showing him in his mundane, ordinary world.
- ▶ In *Star Wars* you see Luke Skywalker being bored to death as a farm boy before he tackles the universe.
- ▶ In the *Wizard of Oz* you have Dorothy in Kansas.

The Call to Adventure

- ▶ 2.) The hero is presented with a problem, challenge or adventure. Maybe the land is dying, as in the King Arthur stories about the search for the Grail.
- ▶ In detective stories, it's the hero being offered a new case.
- ▶ In romantic comedies it could be the first sight of that special but annoying someone the hero or heroine will be pursuing/sparring with.

Refusal of the Call

- ▶ 3.) The hero is reluctant at first.
- ▶ Often at this point the hero balks at the threshold of adventure. After all, he or she is facing the greatest of all fears - fear of the unknown.
- ▶ In *The Lion King* Simba refuses to return to Pride Rock and accept his destiny.

Meeting with the Mentor

- ▶ 4.) Heroes are almost always started on their journey by a character who has mastered the laws of the outside world and come back to bestow the wisdom upon them.
- ▶ It is a Merlin-like character who is the hero's mentor. The mentor gives advice and sometimes magical weapons.
- ▶ The mentor can only go so far with the hero. Eventually the hero must face the unknown by himself. Sometimes the Wise Old Man/Woman is required to give the hero motivation to get the adventure going.
- ▶ In *Star Wars* it is Obi-Wan who mentors Luke. In the *Wizard of Oz* it is Glinda who mentors Dorothy.

Crossing the Threshold

- ▶ 5.) The hero enters the unknown and passes the first threshold.
- ▶ The hero fully enters the special world of the story for the first time. This is the moment at which the story takes off and the adventure gets going.
- ▶ The balloon goes up, the romance begins, the spaceship blasts off, the wagon train gets rolling. Dorothy sets out on the Yellow Brick Road.
- ▶ The hero is now committed to his/her journey and there's no turning back.

Tests, Allies, Enemies

- ▶ 6.) The hero encounters tests and helpers.
- ▶ The hero is forced to make allies and enemies in the special world, and to pass certain tests and challenges that are part of his/her training.
- ▶ In *Star Wars* the cantina is the setting for the forging of an important alliance with Han Solo and the start of an important enmity with Jabba the Hutt.
- ▶ In *Wizard of Oz* Dorothy meets the Scarecrow, Tin Man, and Cowardly Lion.

Approach to the Inmost Cave

- ▶ 7.) The inmost cave may represent many things in the Hero's story such as an actual location in which lies a terrible danger or an inner conflict which up until now the Hero has not had to face.
- ▶ At the threshold to the inmost cave the Hero may once again face some of the doubts and fears that first surfaced upon his call to adventure.
- ▶ He may need some time to reflect upon his journey and the treacherous road ahead in order to find the courage to continue.
- ▶ In many myths the hero has to descend into hell to retrieve a loved one, or into a cave to fight a dragon and gain a treasure. It's Theseus going to the Labyrinth to face the Minotaur.
- ▶ In *Star Wars* it's Luke and company being sucked into the Death Star where they will rescue Princess Leia.

The Supreme Ordeal

- ▶ 8.) The Supreme Ordeal may be a dangerous physical test or a deep inner crisis that the Hero must face in order to survive or for the world in which the Hero lives to continue to exist.
- ▶ Whether it be facing his greatest fear or most deadly foe, the Hero must draw upon all of his skills and his experiences gathered upon the path to the inmost cave in order to overcome his most difficult challenge.
- ▶ This is the high-point of the Hero's story and where everything he holds dear is put on the line. If he fails, he will either die or live as he knows it will never be the same again.
- ▶ In *Wizard of Oz* it is the defeating of the Wicked Witch. In *Lion King* it is Simba's confrontation with Scar.

Seizing the Prize, Reward

- ▶ 9.) The hero seizes the prize. Having survived death, beaten the dragon, slain the Minotaur, the hero now takes possession of the treasure he's come seeking.
- ▶ The Reward may come in many forms: an object of great importance or power, a secret, greater knowledge or insight, or even reconciliation with a loved one or ally.
- ▶ The hero may settle a conflict with his father or with his shadowy nemesis. In *Return of the Jedi*, Luke is reconciled with both, as he discovers that the dying Darth Vader is his father, and not such a bad guy after all.
- ▶ In *Finding Nemo* it is the reuniting of Marlin and Nemo.

The Road Back

- ▶ 10.) Now the hero must return home with his reward but this time the anticipation of danger is replaced with that of acclaim and perhaps vindication, absolution or even exoneration.
- ▶ But the Hero's journey is not yet over and he may still need one last push back into the Ordinary World. The moment before the Hero finally commits to the last stage of his journey may be a moment in which he must choose between his own personal objective and that of a Higher Cause.
- ▶ The hero's not out of the woods yet. Some of the best chase scenes come at this point, as the hero is pursued by the vengeful forces from whom he has stolen the elixir or the treasure.

Resurrection

- ▶ 11.) The hero emerges from the special world, transformed by his/her experience.
- ▶ At the climax, the hero is severely tested once more on the threshold of home. He or she is purified by a last sacrifice, another moment of death and rebirth, but on a higher and more complete level.
- ▶ In *Finding Nemo* Marlin must now apply everything he has learned when he thinks that Nemo is dead. Marlin realizes his mistake. He apologizes to Nemo for not believing in him. Marlin learns to let go and believe that all will work out in the end.

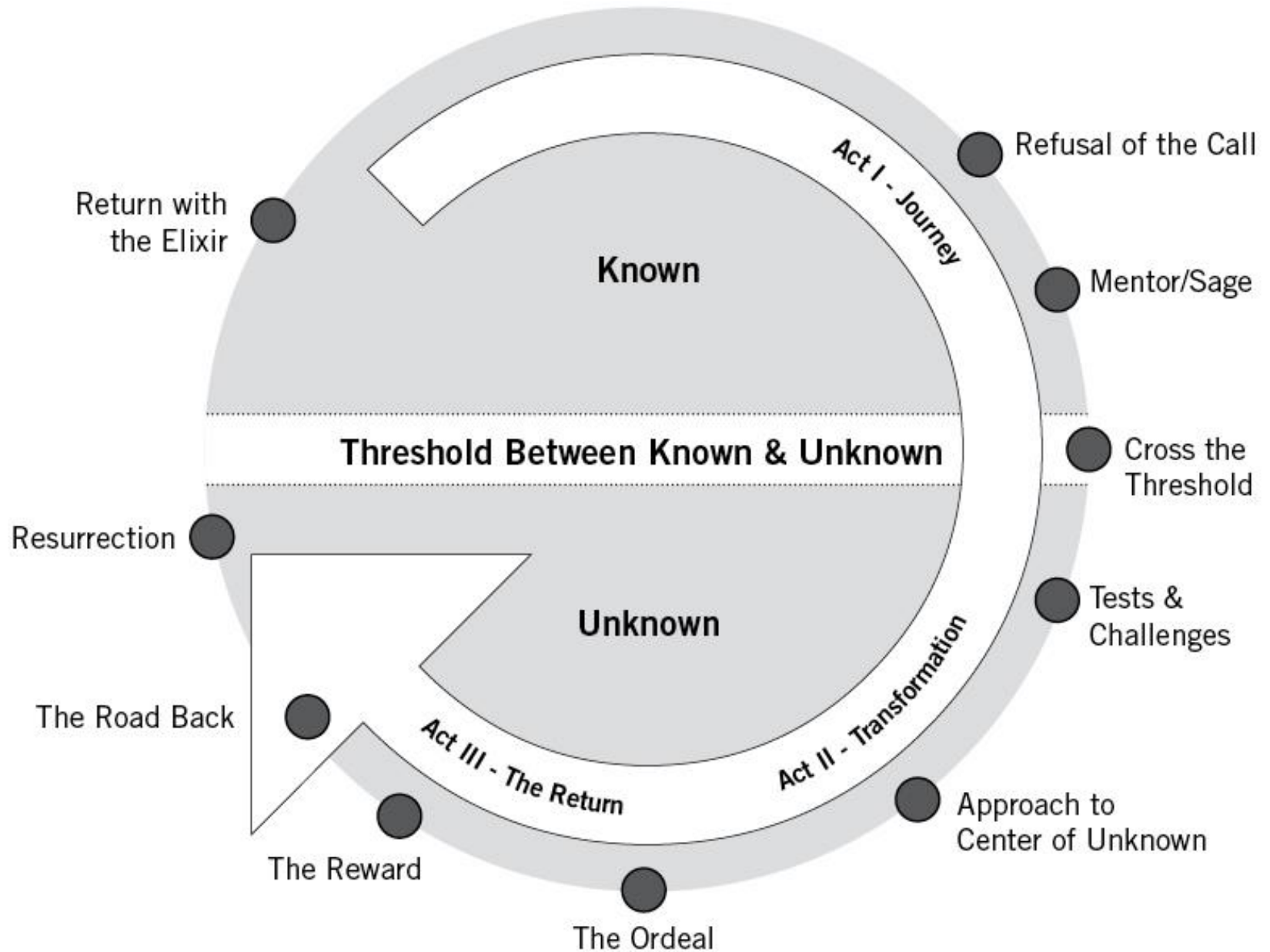
Return with the Elixir

- ▶ 12.) The hero comes back to the ordinary world, but the adventure would be meaningless unless he/she brought back the elixir, treasure, or some lesson from the special world.
- ▶ Sometimes it's just knowledge or experience, but unless he comes back with the elixir or some boon to mankind, he's doomed to repeat the adventure until he does. Many comedies use this ending, as a foolish character refuses to learn his lesson and embarks on the same folly that got him in trouble in the first place.
- ▶ The gain could be treasure won on the quest, or love, or just the knowledge that the special world exists and can be survived. Sometimes it's just coming home with a good story to tell.

So once more...

- ▶ The hero is introduced in his ORDINARY WORLD where he receives the CALL TO ADVENTURE.
- ▶ He is RELUCTANT at first to CROSS THE FIRST THRESHOLD where he eventually encounters TESTS, ALLIES and ENEMIES.
- ▶ He reaches the INNERMOST CAVE where he endures the SUPREME ORDEAL.
- ▶ He SEIZES THE SWORD or the treasure and is pursued on the ROAD BACK to his world.
- ▶ He is RESURRECTED and transformed by his experience.
- ▶ He RETURNS to his ordinary world with a treasure, boon, or ELIXIR to benefit his world

The Hero's Journey



Activity

- ▶ In your group discuss modern examples of stories that follow the Hero's Journey.
- ▶ DO NOT USE AN EXAMPLE ALREADY GIVEN (*Star Wars, Wizard of Oz, The Lion King, Finding Nemo, etc.*)
- ▶ Use your examples and fill out the Graphic Organizer. Make sure to list all the titles you used. (The worksheet only says use one example, but you may use multiple)